

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

THE CHESS PIECE MAGICIAN by Douglas Bruton



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Themes/issues addressed in this book

Family, friendship, holidays, secrets, death, Uig Chessmen, Isle of Lewis, good and evil, bravery

Book Summary

On his family's annual holiday on the Isle of Lewis, Corrie finds what appears to be another of the famous Lewis chess pieces on a beach in Uig. However, this piece is different to the rest. Corrie is reluctant to share his find with Kat, a girl with local connections, but she seems to know that he is hiding something. When he is startled by a strange voice in the night, he seeks Kat's help and together they begin to look for answers. Before long, they find themselves fighting alongside the Chess Piece Magician in a terrifying battle to stop the island from falling under the clutches of an evil creature from legend. This thrilling and thought-provoking adventure was shortlisted for the Kelpies Prize in 2008.

BEFORE READING

Group Activities

- Discussion: what are the Lewis Chessmen? Have you ever seen any?
- Discussion: where is Lewis? How would you get there? Have you ever been?
- Discussion: what do you know about Vikings? Where did they come from?
- Discussion: do you ever go on holiday? Where do you go? Who chooses where you go? Do you like going there?

AFTER READING (note, contains spoilers!)

Individual Work

- Write a paragraph on the thoughts and feelings you had when:
 - a) Corrie first hears the voices in the night (chapter 3)
 - b) You hear the tale of the sea dragon (chapter 4)
 - c) You read Kat's great aunt's letter (chapter 9)
 - d) Shrack comes (chapter 10)
- Look at the title of the book on the front cover. The 'C' in 'Chess' has been shaped to look like an animal's head. This kind of lettering is known as 'illuminated' lettering. Using the internet and your library, try to find some other examples of this, and using what you have found, write your own name in this style. Make the first letter of your given and family names very decorative and colourful. Names may be displayed on your classroom wall.
- In chapter 1, Corrie isn't very enthusiastic about his holiday in Uig. There is no cinema or television and his friends' holiday photographs always seem to be more interesting than his. Think about what he has and doesn't have in Uig, and then write four paragraphs on why you would or would not enjoy being on holiday there. Give reasons for your answers.

Group Activities

- Group task: take a map of the Island of Lewis (include Harris – they are joined!), and looking at the scale, try to work out how long Shrack would need to be in order to coil herself around the island three times, as it says she did on page 65. Compare your findings with other groups.
- Class activity: learn how to play chess and create a chess league. Find someone to teach you how to play chess – you can do this at home, or there are free online chess tutors. Perhaps pupils who already know can teach others? Names can be placed in a hat and drawn at random to see who will play whom, and the winner of each game will go on to play somebody else. Play until you have a class chess champion.

(continued overleaf)

Kelpies Series Summary

The award-winning Kelpies series is Scotland's favourite collection of children's fiction. Floris Books took over the list in 2001, republishing classic works by authors such as Kathleen Fidler, Mollie Hunter, George Mackay Brown and Allan Campbell McLean. Since then, we have continued to add to the series with a range of highly successful new Scottish novels for children including books by Gill Arbuthnott, Alex Nye, Lari Don, Anne Forbes, Annemarie Allan, Mike Nicholson and Margaret Forrester.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS COVERED

5-14 Curriculum (Scotland)

Years: P4-P7

Listening:

Listening in Groups

Listening for Information, including instructions and directions

Reading:

Reading for Information

Reading to Reflect

Awareness of Genre

Talking:

Talking in Groups

Talking about Texts

Talking about Experiences, including feelings and opinions

Writing:

Functional

Imaginative

National Curriculum (England, Wales, Northern Ireland)

Key Stage 2

English: Reading

Reading Strategies

Response to Texts, including

analysing and evaluating

Reading for Information

National Literacy Strategy:

Text-Level Reading

Text-Level Writing

Vocabulary

- Class project: The Vikings. Find out all you can about the Vikings: where they came from, what they looked like, what kind of clothes they wore, and so on. Then think about what we know about the Lewis Chessmen. How did they come to be in Scotland? How, why and when did the Vikings come to Scotland? How do we know all this? What evidence is there? You may use the internet and your library to research this. You may also like to use some artwork to enhance your project. Perhaps you could make a Viking longship, or create a model settlement?
- Class activity: if you live in or near Edinburgh, visit the Museum of Scotland to see the Lewis Chessmen pieces that are kept there.

Vocabulary

- Check you know what the following words mean (page numbers of example words in brackets):

anticipation (41)	askew (104)	banister (132)	beseechingly (108)	brandished (139)
brittle (138)	buffeting (24)	commemorative (159)	condolences (133)	corrugated (10)
deft (117)	disembowelled (25)	disintegrated (140)	disoriented (39)	embossed (18)
emphatically (44)	etched (48)	evaporate (62)	exaggerated (86)	excavation (17)
extravagant (12)	flinched (144)	flotsam & jetsam (92)	flyleaf (120)	gloat (78)
glowering (20)	halberd (117)	hirpled (21)	incredulously (146)	instinctively (140)
insubstantial (150)	interwoven (149)	linoleum (41)	marram (99)	megalithic (143)
operatic (46)	optimism (53)	ornithologist (14)	penultimate (118)	pirouette (21)
plundered (66)	posturing (11)	prediction (71)	prolonged (148)	recognition (133)
recoiled (145)	scepticism (97)	scornful (146)	serpentine (135)	silhouetted (35)
sincere (37)	spindrift (143)	tenuous (80)	titan (147)	unravelling (70)